



End-of-Year Report 2021

Introduction

As we approach the close of 2021 and my 3rd year at this wonderful organisation, the magic of the 'Loving Family' which exists in our homes has not lost its sheen for me. It is so inspiring to create these spaces, where biologically unconnected children from abused and neglected pasts, can feel that they belong. This crucial foundation helps to rebuild their lives and gives them a much needed sense of belonging.

Keeping the core of our work alive during the tough times that we have faced, has been non-negotiable for us. These times require family to be even more connected and I wish to salute all our foster mums and dads, assistants and support staff team. Although everyone is needing a good rest after facing the barrage of challenges over the last while, the stories of family connection being created, are still a daily occurrence in our homes.

Highlights

- **Evelyn Connolly Transitional Support Programme development:**

Covid restrictions have made it difficult to implement all our plans for this programme. However, it has been gratifying to see what has been possible. Our partner organisation, Mamelani, who specialises in youth in transition, managed to complete all the planned workshops with our foster mothers in developing their skills in working with the 16+ age group of our children. Next year, the plan is for Mamelani to work with smaller groups of foster mothers to develop more advanced skills.

Our transition home in Westlake continues to be an important support to the four young people who have lived there this year. We are excited to announce that renovating the second home is underway and it will be ready in February 2022. It will be utilised by a second group of young people who are aging out of foster care. It is based in Khayelitsha and will serve the increasing numbers of children in this community who are facing the need to transition out of their foster homes.

- **Developments in staff team capacity:**

We have previously reported on the urgency to develop staff capacity, especially given the growth in our Transition Programme and in reaching the high quality we aim for. Having secured three-year funding for two dedicated practitioners in the Transitional Programme earlier this year, the two candidates we employed have settled into their roles which has made a big difference. Furthermore, our governmental Department of Social Development approved the funding for an additional social worker position, and since being appointed, Andisiwe Phike, has made a great impact.

Additionally, we have continued with our 'Buddy/Volunteer' initiative to find unemployed people willing to volunteer and obtain experience to enhance their employability. The two 'Buddy' positions within our Programme team in the first half of the year, were employed

when positions became available. Recently, two Buddy positions were filled in our finance department and one to support our office administration. This important team capacity support means that we will be formalizing our volunteerism programme next year.

- **Establishing satellite offices in Khayelitsha and Kayamandi:**

The growth of our staff team has led to a rather cramped head office. Instead of looking for bigger premises, we have adapted two spaces in our communities to act as satellite offices which has freed up space at our central office in Plumstead. Both Khayelitsha and Kayamandi have seven foster homes in each area and are situated an hour's travel from our central office. The new office spaces have enabled our social workers and social auxiliary workers to offer critical added support to our foster homes in these areas through their greater accessibility.

- **Re-purposing of the Lizo Nobanda centre in Khayelitsha:**

One of the main purposes of the Lizo Nobanda centre over the last 16 years, has been to provide an Early Childhood Development facility for the many young children we were admitting that needed this start to their education. As time has past, fewer and fewer of our children have needed this facility to a point where this year, we have not had any of our foster children enrolled. The reason is twofold, firstly, most of our children are older than this three to five year age group and secondly, that the provision of early development services in the Khayelitsha area has expanded significantly over the years. There are now in excess of 150 ECD facilities. Furthermore, the number of children attending our ECD, from the community, have dwindled significantly. This is an unsustainable situation and running preschool centres is not our core business. The Home from Home Board has therefore decided to close the ECD centre from the 30th November 2021.

It has been a difficult decision to make and implement however, we believe a necessary one and are excited by the new opportunities the Lizo Nobando facility will provide our foster families in Khayelitsha. Initially, it will continue to be a library and computer centre for our children and serve as a satellite office for our social workers and education coordinator. There are additional plans being considered like, a space to hold metro meetings and training sessions with for foster mothers. Overall, the repurposing of this facility will improve the support we can provide to our families in this area, rather than focussing on a function that is not our core business and which is no longer providing an impactful role.

- **Continued development in the virtual connection to our Foster Families:**

The role out of computers and data connectivity to all our 36 homes by the first half of this year was a very important development, and ensuring that each home makes effective use of this has required a lot of training and support. We could not have predicted how crucial this development was going to be, given the ongoing pandemic and the need to connect virtually to support our families from a communication and education perspective.

- **Acknowledging and celebrating Long Service of staff:**

The field of caring for vulnerable children is notorious for burn-out and high staff turnover due to the heightened emotional engagement that the work demands. Given the added pressure

of the current times, it felt important to recognise our staff team members with long service. 26 staff members were recognized for 5 years+ service; 12 staff for 10 years+ and one staff member, Foster Mum Nikki, for 15 years+. In fact, Nikki Kemele was the first foster mum at HfH and has five of her six children matriculating this year. What an achievement!

Having so many staff members with long service is a significant accomplishment to both the individual staff members and our organization.

These are the familiar faces we become accustomed to seeing and relying on each day when we need them. Whether it be to listen to a problem or uphold the values we hold dear. They will be the ones to be there when children return to visit as adults with their biological families one day. This is what deepens family and makes us feel that we belong.

- **Donor support/Fundraising:**

At the beginning of the year, we witnessed the signs of the Covid pandemic on the economy and subsequent pressure on some of our loyal supporters. We knew that securing funding for our foster homes to ensure no closures, was vital. Our campaign has seen good support from a number of new donors, and critically, from active loyal donors increasing their support to us. We estimate to have lost almost R2 million from withdrawals or reductions in support due to the economic times. However, our fundraising income looks to be on track to meet the budget by our financial year end in February. This is a huge relief and thanks needs to go out to our supporters and our fundraising team.

Priorities in our future strategic focus

- **Long term strategic plan:**

Although we mentioned our intention to develop a new three to five-year plan in the second half of this year, the changing scenarios of the Covid pandemic and other disruptive happenings in our country have made it difficult to look beyond the more immediate responses. We have however, made some progress in identifying some key longer term questions that need to be addressed. Firstly, is the question of growth or, consolidation of services. Understandably, the last period has focussed on consolidation while we adapt to the changing conditions, but we need to clarify our long term stance. Our Vision, *“A world in which each child has a safe home and a loving family”*, certainly assumes that we look to growing our reach which makes sense considering the South African context - over a million children in the need of the type of care we provide. If we aim to grow our impact, how do we do this in a sustainable manner in an unstable world? Secondly, Home from Home has always aimed to provide Best Practice within the Cluster Foster Care arena. The question is how do we maintain this with the extra pressure of growing and furthermore, where do we need to further improve on this standard?

These are some of the fundamental questions we need clarity about in effectively mapping out the future of our organisation. In committing to this process, we will seek the services of an external facilitator early next year to work with our staff team and the Board in establishing this clear longer term picture.

- **Fundraising:**

I mentioned under the 'highlights' that we have been blessed with new support this year to offset the large withdrawals due to economic pressure on established donors. What will be key going forward is to deepen our relationships with these new donors for the long term.

Additional initiatives to attract funding in the coming year are the following:

- Increasing our proposals to Trusts and Foundations. For 2022, we are investing in the consultation services of a specialist.
- Development of a Legacy Programme. We have many loyal donors who have become part of our extended family and we hope will consider a bequest in their will. We have never created this opportunity, and feel it could bring valuable support to the organisation's sustainability.
- Developing more formal M&E processes for our programmes. We believe that the outcomes for our children, are improved through the quality of care we provide through our programmes of the 'Loving Family Home', educational support, reunification and transitional support. Although basic measures to show these outcomes are in place, the formal development of M&E tools would enable us to strongly advocate for our model of care. We will need to source specialists to enable these developments.

- **Maintaining the focus of 'Family' connection:**

At the beginning of the year, the Henley Business School presented their MBA project findings with Home from Home. Our stand out strength was the sense of 'Family' that existed within our organisation. It was a great relief for us to hear this given that we profess to *'creating a second chance at family'*, within our foster homes.

The social distancing due to pandemic has created greater awareness of the importance of connection between us. The media is inundated with articles on the topic. As a team, we have realised that we need to work hard at maintaining our connectedness, especially in the face of restrictions on creating these opportunities. We ask our foster families to create 'family' where there are no biological ties, and it is crucial that we keep focusing on real connectedness. Our team believes that growing our connectedness is a crucial part of expanding our organisational effectiveness. This will need to continue to be a focus in the coming year.

Thank You

We approach 2022 with the certainty that more surprises will emerge and we will need to be flexible and adaptable. The past two years have taught us to be better at how we deal with uncertainty. Although the threat of sustainability is thick in the air for all NGOs and other organisations, we are blessed to feel excited by the potential that our organisation has in providing improved care to the most marginalised children in our society. This blessing is largely due to our greater family who is hard at work for our cause – YOU!

Many thanks and God bless you all over this special family time.